3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

had to pick him up and put him back on it. After a time he fell off again, and his horse became frightened and kicked off its saddle and upset the baggage-ponies, and they stampeded all over the jungle and many loads came off. It took us a long time to get the caravan started again. As the *chirik* could not sit on his own horse I brought him in across my saddle-bow."

At the next stage, Chadar Kul, we found ourselves among Dulanis, the same cheerful, dirty, good-looking, quarrelsome, disreputable, singularly attractive race whose acquaintance we had made in the spring at Merket. Once more we chafed under the attentions of hordes of male sightseers, once more we marvelled at the beauty of cherubic but incredibly dirty children. Just outside the village we passed two large parties of gamblers, almost all men, dicing under the trees; in the bazaar their wives were minding the shops and doing what little work is done in a Dulani village. The Tarim river jungles, which here began in earnest, held great numbers of "Shaw's pheasant," magnificent birds with plumage of flame-colour shot with purple and tail-feathers barred with black. The sport, indeed, in this neighbourhood was almost too good; besides the woods full of pheasants, the ponds and marsh-lakes swarmed with duck and teal, which had evidently just arrived on their way south. At one place the wild duck actually came and sat on the village pond, eighty yards from the back of the rest-house in which we lodged.

At Tumshuk, forty miles east of Maralbashi, we left the main road and struck southwards for about twenty miles to a lonely shepherd's cottage on the south bank of the Tarim, where we spent four most pleasant and restful days encamped in a little grove of desert poplars among the melon-beds. Pheasants, duck, teal and other game abounded, while the brushwood-covered flats were a perfect Zoo for wild life of all kinds.

It was a charming place in the bright autumn weather; the blue river wound close by; to the south rose abruptly from the plain another of the curious ranges of hills which are peculiar to the neighbourhood; within a mile or so lay two beautiful fresh-water lakes, one of them ten miles long and two broad, reflecting in their glassy waters here the crags of the Choka Tagh, there the mighty dunes of the Takla Makan. For we were on the very verge of the great desert; it was beyond those very dunes that Sven Hedin lost all his camels

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
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kang was broken down, the top surface of mud had given way, and through the large holes the semi-burnt horse-manure appeared in the space below. We received a good deal of gratuitous, but not ill-natured, advice from the young recruits as to the angle at which our bedding could best be distributed, to lessen the danger of falling into the chasm. 'That quilt must come a little more to the north, or your feet will be down the hole.' 'It is a tight fit for three, but you can move a little more to the east and still be safe.'

Failing hot water, we sent for a basin full of cold, provoking the remark: 'They are extraordinarily clean. Always washing!' We were indeed glad at last to lie down under cover of darkness and get some hours of sleep! Viewed by the light of the grey dawn our conditions looked no less wretched than they had done the night before. The court[1] was again crowded, and round the entrance of the inn groups of men and boys were already gathered throwing dice and gambling for small stakes. Half-a-dozen youths at once attracted our attention, their trouser-legs having been slit down, showing the flesh covered with festering wounds as a result of floggings. At 8 a.m. an officer came round, and we signified to him our desire to move on that day. He was aggravatingly affable, and told us that on such a hard journey as the one we were taking, it was always well to rest for a day. 'Our own food-supply and the grain for the animals is only sufficient to get us through to Hami,' we protested, 'and delay will be serious.' 'Yes, yes, yes, yes,' he replied, 'you leave it to me and I'll see that the telegram to the Governor goes to-day,' thus incidentally revealing the fact that he had not yet sent it.

It was useless to argue, although our passports bore a *laissez-passer* for the Sinkiang frontier. 'I have been

[1] T.J.G. [inn at Hsinghsinghsia--Analyst]